

SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

10th Year of Publication

The Independent Bulletin of Science Policy

Vol. X, No. 14

P.O. Box 6226A, Washington, D.C. 20015

September 1, 1980

Top NSF Post Snared in Election-Year Politics

There's been no dissent voiced from the proposition that John B. Slaughter is extremely well-qualified to serve as Director of the National Science Foundation, the position for which President Carter nominated him July 3.

However, as of late August, the nomination had become so deeply entangled in election-year politics that there was reasonable doubt that it would go anywhere prior to November 4, if then. Slaughter, a former assistant director at NSF, left the Foundation last year to become provost and academic vice president of Washington State University, where he previously headed the applied physics laboratory. One of the few blacks to rise high in research administration, he would, if confirmed, become the first black to head a major federal research organization — a fact that surely did not elude the Administration's personnel

Foreign Aid R&D Funds Take a Beating—Page 4

managers in this election year.

When Slaughter initially replied with a no, thank you, to the offer — explaining that he and his family had recently moved from Washington, DC, and liked it fine in the Pacific Northwest—into operation went the principle that there's nothing like a rejection to fire up a suitor.

To the task came Jimmy Carter himself, who telephonically notified Slaughter that the well-being of the United States required his presence as head of the National Science Foundation. (SGR Vol. X, No. 13).

Slaughter finally came around, the nomination was formally submitted — three days after NSF Director Richard C. Atkinson made his long-scheduled departure for the chancellorship of UC San Diego — and on August 1, the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee held a friendly confirmation hearing.

Political difficulties then intruded in the form of a pact among Senate Republicans, as recommended by the party's Senate Policy Committee, to block fixed-term appointments during these final months of the presidential term.

There's a big batch of pending appointments in the legislative mill, but it's the fixed-term kind — specifying a duration — that the Republicans are concerned about, for obvious purposes. The NSF direc-

torship is for a set term of six years, in the absence of the unlikely exercise of the President's statutory right to remove the occupant. As that can be a messy and prolonged process, the Republicans simply agreed to minimize the problem by putting a freeze on confirmations. Since the Senate landscape is laden with opportunities for ambush and delay, including the ultimate time killer, the filibuster, the Democrats clearly perceive that Republican cooperation is essential.

This being so, it is almost compulsory to read machiavellian political motives into the August 21 doings of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, a Democratic-dominated body (9-6) which holds committee jurisdiction over NSF and its major appointments. On that day, without notice to their Republican colleagues, the Democrats met and favorably reported out the Slaughter nomination. To satisfy the requirement that a majority be present to

(Continued on Page 2)

In Brief

Frank Press insists that one term is enough as White House Science Adviser and that regardless of the election outcome, he's heading back to MIT around the end of the year. Meanwhile, it's said at the National Academy of Sciences that Press is a strong prospect for succeeding Philip Handler in the NAS presidency next year.

In regard to the persistent question of how Press is faring as Carter's adviser, what's noteworthy is that most previous occupants of the science job found themselves given less and less responsibility as time went on. Carter started out skeptical of the need for a science office, but has since found it a useful shop for chores ranging from a review of the Kemeny (Three Mile Island) Commission Report to organizing the study of that mysterious blast off the coast of South Africa last September.

Out to the Movies: NSF reports that it has acquired videotapes of House of Representative floor debates, and "has used these tapes for training and orientation purposes, particularly with program officials, to help convey the kinds of issues raised and concerns expressed by Congress about the NSF budget request. The goal is improved communication about NSF programs in terms understandable to the Congress."

High-Level Appeals Spare Science Funds from Senate Cuts

Top science heavy-weights were recruited for rescue duty last month when negotiations in the Senate budget committee over the relative support of military and civilian programs threatened to take a further large bite out of budget category 250 for the Fiscal Year 1981. This is the "general science" category that covers agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, as well as basic research in the Department of Energy.

The cuts were considered to make way for higher military spending, and were rumored to be severe. In the case of the NSF, for example, a figure of \$100 million — almost 10 per cent of the Foundation's budget — was being tossed around. This was enough to set off an intense lobbying campaign, including letters from the White House Science Office and Lewis Branscomb, chairman of the National Science Board and chief scientist of IBM.

What may have helped tip the balance was a letter to the budget committee from William Perry, Undersecretary of Defense for Research and

Technology, stating that he considered any cuts in the NSF budget to be very damaging, a case where less butter would not necessarily mean better guns. The arguments worked; and according to NSF Acting Director Donald Langenberg, "250 is in pretty good shape."

Press to Visit Four African Nations

Frank Press, the White House Science Adviser, will head a delegation that will leave Washington September 20 for a 10-day trip that will include visits to Nigeria, Senegal, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. On the agenda are the usual talks about scientific and technical cooperation.

Last month, Patricia Harris, Secretary of Health and Human Services, announced that meetings with Nigerian health officials had led to an agreement to set up a Joint Task Force to develop cooperative bilateral activities in various health-related fields.

NSF DIRECTOR

(Continued from page 1)

constitute a quorum, the Democrats employed what is known as a "rolling quorum," which means that those who arrive and then leave are considered present for quorum purposes. In this way, eight Democrats were recorded in attendance. The vote in committee cleared the nomination for the next step — still pending at this writing — which is scheduling for consideration on the Senate floor.

While the Democrats were carrying out this maneuver in committee, the ranking Republican on that body, William S. Schweiker, of Pennsylvania, had been expressing the opinion that the no-confirmations policy should be applied on a selective basis. The NSF directorship, he noted, has always been considered apolitical; furthermore, the Senator and his aides recalled that the NSF bureaucracy had always been

attentive to constituency matters routed through the Senator's office. Schweiker's initial impulse, then, was to exclude the appointment from the Republican freeze. But it's now said that he has doubts about the feasibility of doing that following the fast move by the Democrats.

Why did the Democrats do it that way, when it seems likely that the Slaughter appointment could have been shepherded through with Republican cooperation?

A reasonable speculation is that the Democrats see political profit in inflaming the Republicans to oppose the appointment of the first black to so elevated a post in the national research enterprise.

Slaughter, meanwhile, has wisely kept his Washington University ties intact, while waiting the outcome of this squalid drama on Capital Hill.—DSG

© Science & Government Report, Inc., 1980

ISSN 0048-9581

Editor and Publisher
Daniel S. Greenberg

Associate Publisher
Wanda J. Reif

Contributing Correspondents

Anne Roark, Clive Cookson (Washington); Michael Kenward (London); Francois Seguer (Paris)

Independently published by *Science & Government Report, Inc.*, twice monthly, except once each in January, June & July. Annual Subscription: Institutions, \$118.50 (two years, \$198.50); individuals, \$48.50 (two years, \$82.50). Editorial offices at 3736 Kanawha St., N.W., Washington, DC 20015. Tel. (202) 244-4135. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC. Please address all subscription correspondence to Box 6226A, Northwest Station, Washington, DC 20015. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. SGR is available on Xerox University Microfilms. Claims for missing back issues will be filled without charge if made within six months of publication date.

GOP, Democrats Swap Abuse on R&D Record

This year's Republican and Democratic party platforms contain more ideological flavor than is customary in such documents, but the planks dealing with research and development are virtually interchangeable, except for the standard partisan barbs.

The main theme of each is that the other party failed to do right by research, with the Republicans contending that R&D dwindled under Carter, and the Democrats claiming that they've repaired the damage of the Nixon-Ford years. The truth of the matter — which is not a concern of platform writers — is that the Johnson and Nixon presidencies were hard on R&D; Ford set a policy of accelerating government support in these areas, and Carter has continued it.

The similarity of Republican and Democratic dogma on research-related matters simply signifies that the subject offers no opportunity for political exploitation. There's no profit in taking a stand on the budget of the National Science Foundation, the peer-review system, or the return of the Defense Department to campus research — mainly because the great majority of the electorate doesn't care or even know about these items.

Furthermore, the scientific community, proceeding from delusions about political purity, deliberately refrains from taking the political route in seeking its way in Washington.

The Democratic platform plank on R&D originated in discussions between Carter's chief domestic aide, Stuart E. Eizenstat, and the White House Science Office. Following the Democrats' contentious convention, Eizenstat is said to have remarked that the "Science and Technology" plank was the only one over which the Carter-Kennedy forces did not fight.

Searching deep for differences between the party planks on R&D, what's notable is that the Democratic plank stands by itself, whereas the Republicans deal with "Research and Development" under the broad heading of "National Security" (SGR Vol. X, No. 13). The explanation for that is an absence of seasoned science advisers in the Reagan camp, compared to a plentiful supply available for Carter. The White House science staff is naturally curious about Reagan's scientists, but says that it hasn't heard of any so far. SGR has asked around, and can't turn up any either.

Following is the "Science and Technology" plank of the 1980 Democratic Party Platform:

The Nixon-Ford Administration permitted serious decline in the state of science and technology in our country.

There had been a decade of erosion of federal support of research and development. The funding of basic research in particular was far below its peak level of the mid-1960s.

Science and technology advice had been seriously downgraded and removed from the White House, until pressures from the science and engineering community had it restored through an act of Congress.

The previous decline in support had affected opportunities in science and engineering. It had resulted in the inadequate replacement of facilities and instrumentation and their growing obsolescence in the face of new scientific advances and needs.

Not only the work of our academic research centers, but also our technological innovation and economic competitiveness were impaired by this erosion of federal support.

To counter these conditions and help revitalize the country's science and technology, the Carter Administration, working with Congress, has taken a number of steps. The Office of Science and Technology Policy has been strengthened and

upgraded. Growth has been restored in the budgets for federal research and development activities. Basic biomedical research has been strengthened to increase our fundamental knowledge of health and disease.

These are just a few of the innovations that have been made. Our scientific and technological agenda remains unfinished. The 1980s offer great promise. During the next four years, we will work to:

- Continue to strengthen our science and technology and provide for continuity and stability of support to research and development;

- Continue to monitor the flow of talent into science and engineering and provide the appropriate training and opportunities to ensure an adequate number of well-trained scientists and engineers in the coming years, with particular emphasis on women and minorities;

- Pay continued attention to the support of research facilities to make certain they remain among the best in the world;

- Successfully launch the Space Shuttle, take advantage of the many opportunities it offers to make space activities more economic and productive, and release new resources for the future scientific exploration of space; and

- Expand our programs of cooperation in science and technology with all nations who seek development and a stable, peaceful world.

Big Promises, Little Cash for 3d World R&D

The Administration is facing new problems in Congress in its attempts to secure more money for the support of science and technology in the Third World.

Following the Senate's continued refusal to support the creation of an Institute for Scientific and Technical Cooperation (ISTC) — the proposed flagship for strengthening scientific links with developing countries — the House Appropriations Committee has voted to cut from the FY 1981 foreign aid request a proposed \$10-million contribution to a new scientific fund being set up by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The significance of the fund is that it was about the only concrete achievement to emerge from last year's United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development. And the US delegation was largely responsible for getting it accepted.

Third World countries, negotiating as the Group of 77, came to the Vienna conference demanding that the developed countries contribute between \$2 billion and \$4 billion a year by the end of the decade to a new science and technology "financing system." But they were persuaded to accept a compromise, which included a two-year interim fund run by UNDP, with a target for voluntary contributions of \$250 million, and vague promises that the more ambitious proposals would receive further consideration within the UN.

The US played a key role in engineering the compromise, and getting it agreed to in Vienna. Prior to the conference, the State Department had decided that, second only to its plans for the ISTC, a \$250-million fund "to which the US would contribute its fair share" — expected to be about \$50 million — was at the top of the list of initiatives it was prepared to support. And while some developed countries remained skeptical of the whole thing, claiming their existing technical aid programs to be sufficient, others indicated that they would be prepared to contribute.

Particularly important from both the US and the UNDP point of view was the fact that the promise of a US contribution seemed likely to attract comparable support from members of OPEC, which State Department officials have long felt should be doing more to help international development efforts.

Since Vienna, however, US enthusiasm for the fund has been scaled down as domestic purse strings have been tightened — and the scope of the fund, at least financially, has contracted correspondingly. In mid-fall the US was talking of a \$25-million contribution. When the President's request went to Congress in January, the proposed contribution was \$15 million; and by the time the budget was revised in March, it was down to \$10 million.

This last reduction coincided with a meeting in New

Carter to Get 'Quake Study

California's earthquake potential has been subjected to still another study — this one ordered by the President, and carried out by the White House science office for the National Security Council. The study was to be delivered last week to Governor Jerry Brown, and may be publicly released in the next couple of weeks.

The genesis of this inquiry traces back to President Carter's visit last spring to the Mt. St. Helens volcano, whose big and destructive rumbles caused him to inquire about the effects that a California earthquake might have on the hundreds of defense facilities in that state. Of prime consideration were various ground facilities for the satellite intelligence systems that are the electronic keystones of the national security apparatus.

A study was then formally ordered by the National Security Council, with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy designated to select and orchestrate the participants, who included seismologists disaster planners, and students of past earthquakes.

Apart from recommendations for dealing with the military aspects of an earthquake, the study also suggests a big speedup in initiating disaster-relief activities, as well as intensified work on prediction techniques.

York at which various countries — with some notable omissions, such as Canada and Japan — announced how much they were prepared to pledge to the fund. In the end only \$36 million was raised (with additional informal promises from France and Germany of \$9 million). UNDP officials announced that this was sufficient to get the fund under way. But the total was far short of the \$150 million aimed for. Several countries would have been prepared to give more, but scaled down their contributions when they learned that the US was doing the same.

With plans for disbursing the new fund well in hand — the money will be used to help support the attempts of Third World governments to develop an appropriate "infrastructure" for science and technology, and 500 proposals have been received for project grants — alarm bells started ringing six weeks ago when it was learned that the House Appropriations Committee was proposing that the US contribution be eliminated.

The proposal to cut the contribution took Washington supporters of the fund by surprise. It was

(Continued on page 5)

...Aid Backers Hope for Reprieve by House

(Continued from page 4)

apparently taken on the initiative of staff members of the Appropriations Committee Foreign Affairs Subcommittee, and went through both the subcommittee and the full committee mark-up of the 1981 foreign aid request with virtually no discussion — one of the points which is expected to be raised when the bill reaches the floor of the House.

The Appropriations Committee's report on the bill says that the proposed contribution was cut partly because the Administration had failed to provide adequate information about the way that the money would be used. More worrying from the UNDP's point of view is the Committee's decision to insert in the bill language which would prevent any other funds allocated to the foreign-aid budget from being used to support the fund.

Preparations are now being made to introduce an amendment to the foreign aid bill when it reaches the floor of the House, expected to be sometime later this month, although there have been suggestions that, given the political sensitivity of foreign aid, it might be held up until after the November elections.

These efforts are being headed by Rep. Clement Zablocki (D-Wisc.), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Rep. Don Fuqua (D-Fla.), chairman of the House Science and Technology Committee. Both are strong supporters of the fund, and Fuqua has already successfully challenged the Appropriations Committee over its proposal to make substantial cuts in the Department of Energy's basic research budget.

At the very least, supporters of the fund hope that the House can be persuaded to drop the restrictive language. This would either allow the Senate to put the money back, or the State Department to reprogram funds for elsewhere. Those more optimistic are hoping that the House will restore the \$10-million contribution, since the Senate Appropriations Committee has shown no particular enthusiasm for the fund, but has indicated that neither does it have any special desire to see the contribution cut.

Inevitably the political debate about what UNDP will do with the money has become tangled up with continued wrangling over the ISTC. The Administration has argued that the two initiatives are complementary; others have suggested that they may be duplicative, proposing that Congress should support one or the other. Either way, it seems that among those who follow this type of thing in Congress, there is more widespread enthusiasm for the UNDP fund than for the ISTC in the form proposed by the administration. Critics such as Senator Adlai Steven-

son (D-Ill.) have argued that ISTC would be too closely linked to the political goals of the existing foreign aid effort, and should have been set up on a more independent basis, similar to the National Science Foundation.

Zablocki and Fuqua, however, both remain enthusiastic for ISTC. Last year, largely as a result of the relative enthusiasm of their two committees, legislation was passed authorizing the setting up of the institute, but objections in the Senate deprived it of any funds.

This year, the same stalemate seems to be developing. The Administration proposed \$95 million for ISTC in January — \$30.64 million of new money and \$64.36 million in transfers from AID — but cut this back to \$85 million in the March budget revisions. House authorizing committees put the figure back up to \$95 million, and this withstood a floor amendment in June from Rep. Dan Quayle (R-Ind.), who attempted unsuccessfully to have the item cut on the basis that it represented seed money for a new federal bureaucracy.

Elsewhere ISTC's fortunes have not been so bright. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee proposed \$12 million for new programs for ISTC, but under the umbrella of AID rather than as a separate body. (One idea being discussed is that a large proportion of this money would be transferred to the National Academy of Sciences, which would set up a new program under its Board on Science and Technology for Development; but Fuqua and Zablocki are both against any attempt to water down the original concept).

The House Appropriations Committee has also proposed a budget of \$12 million for new international scientific activities under AID, but with no specific mention of ISTC. And the position of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, which last year tried to block any funds for the institute, does not seem to have substantially changed.

The Administration has expressed concern about the difficulties in Congress with funds for both the ISTC and the UNDP fund; but apart from frustration at having its plans publicly thwarted, and except for some officials in the State Department, does not seem unduly upset about either. Beneath the rhetoric, one of

(Continued on page 6)

Booklet Lists All OTA Reports

For a complimentary booklet listing studies completed and in progress at the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, request *Current Assessment Activities* from: Publishing Office, Office of Technology Assessment, US Congress, Washington, DC 20510; tel. (202) 224-8996.

France: R&D Plan Stresses Industry Ties

Paris. The research segment of France's latest five-year economic plan reflects the government's growing anxieties over this country's trailing position in the international rankings of research and development. It also seeks to add momentum to a number of institutional shifts that got underway over the past year.

The plan, eighth in the postwar series, does not attempt to be comprehensive in regard to R&D, nor does it offer the customary forecasts about various disciplines. Instead, it proposes a general invigoration of the national R&D enterprise, starting with more money and going on to still another try at establishing closer links between academic science and industry.

Produced by a working group presided over by Pierre Lafitte, director of Bureau of Mines, the R&D report was prepared in a mere eight months, and in a climate of real competition. The competition came from Pierre Aigrain, the Secretary of State on Research, who had prepared a ten-year plan on research. Since such competition can mean incoherence, Aigrain was granted a three-month delay on the publication of his White Paper so that he could proceed with the necessary harmonization of the two documents.

The R&D report is based on a constant which is both clear and alarming. In 1980, French expenditures on R&D in relationship to its GNP were only 1.8 per cent against 2.4 per cent for the US, 2.2 per cent for West Germany, 2.1 per cent for England and 1.9 per cent for Japan. In relation to Japan and Germany, the French situation has deteriorated continuously since 1969. There are two reasons for this. Public financing, that is the government's research budget, has continuously decreased, from 1.5 per cent of the GNP in 1968, to 1 per cent this year. On the other hand, even though private financing of industrial research is increasing, it remains, percentage-wise, the weakest of all the other

industrial countries: 0.75 per cent of the GNP against 1.1 per cent in the US, 1.2 per cent in Germany, and 1.1 per cent in Japan.

To "make up for this delay," Pierre Lafitte proposes to increase to 2.3 per cent of the GNP in five years. From roughly \$12 billion in 1980, R&D expenditures would go to more than \$17 billion in 1985. According to the Committee on the VIII Plan, the situation requires a high priority for R&D. The principle of a "rapid and vigorous recovery in the growth of R&D" was, in fact decided by the government in 1979. But the Administration, and, in particular, the Secretary of State on Research, then decided that this undertaking should be stretched over 10 years.

With regard to the effectiveness of research institutions, Lafitte is severe. He advocates "developing and multiplying audits of research organizations," and insists: "It is important that there be a method or procedures for outside evaluation of the institutions." Started in 1978, the audits have, however, raised a storm of protests within the research centers and the unions.

First of all, the National Institute for Agronomic Research (INRA), was criticized for being too isolated from outside contacts and for having inclinations towards a monopoly on agronomic research. After that audit, the performance of researchers within INRA has been undergoing a controversial re-evaluation.

Meanwhile, the directors for research of public corporations such as French Gas have been invited to explore ways of broadening their scientific scope.

The National Center for the Exploration of the Oceans (CNEXO) underwent a great streamlining last spring as a step toward expanding the activities of

(Continued on page 7)

FOREIGN AID

(Continued from page 5)

the principle goals for supporting each has been to generate closer economic and political links with the so-called "middle tier" developing countries, which the US needs both as suppliers of raw materials and as potential markets for its manufactured goods.

AID is forbidden to provide assistance to these countries, since the average income levels are not considered sufficiently low; hence the enthusiasm for a separate but related body, as ISTC would have been under the Administration's plans. But considerable success has since been achieved in creating the desired bridges through bilateral links. Last year, White House Science Advisor Frank Press led a team of the Administration's top science administrators to Latin

America, as a result of which a number of joint projects have been agreed with countries such as Brazil and Venezuela.

Any administration support for the UNDP fund is therefore political as much as pragmatic. It could be a useful diplomatic channel. But US negotiators in both Vienna and subsequently New York worked hard to minimize the direct influence which Third World countries will be able to exert over the way in which the money is distributed. UNDP officials argue that for the US to withdraw at this stage would be taken as a sign of bad faith, and could prejudice the success of future North-South negotiations. They are confident that Congress will restore at least the major part of the US contribution, but their message is still taking a lot of selling in Washington.

... Tax Incentives Plan Stirs Controversy

(Continued from Page 6)

other government agencies in oceans-related work. CNEXO lost its coordinating powers, as well as some funds that will now go directly to interested ministries.

It is on industrial research and the behavior of French firms vis-a-vis research, that Lafitte pressed the hardest — and for good reasons. For the past five years, the Government has not stopped repeating that technology and only technology can resolve the economic crisis. The report on the VIII Plan stresses this thesis and emphasizes that even among small enterprises, those that undertake research, export more than others. But Lafitte is cautious with figures, stating that: "rather than a certain quantitative level to be reached, the objective of industrial research must be that of initiating a profound movement which will allow a growing number of enterprises to be attracted to research."

Aigrain's 10-year plan was produced by a wide-ranging assemblage of panels and "thematic" groups, and the reports of two of the latter are stirring considerable controversy. The first of these is the report by Robert Chabal, the senior director of the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), which recommended more centralized authority over preparation of the research budget. This led some observers to conclude that Chabal was putting himself forward as a candidate for the then-vacant post of General Manager for Scientific and Technical Research in the Delegation Generale a la Recherche Scientifique et Technique (DGRST), the French counterpart of the White House science office. Whatever the intent, the job went to Claude Frejaques, a longtime associate of the Minister of Industry, who favors a decentralized budget-making system for R&D.

The other thematic report that's been arousing the science-policy community here was prepared under the direction of Roger Fauroux, a leading industrialist.

The Fauroux report, which came out a few weeks after Chabal's, has a completely different direction. Considering that to reach the R&D objective of 2.3 per cent of the GNP, it will be necessary that industry finance 48 per cent of the national R&D instead of the 42 per cent at present. To do this they must spend over \$4 billion more than usual, from now to 1985. Fauroux however, estimates that they are incapable of this without a push. They must therefore be helped, he says, but in an efficient and neutral way. At present, direct aid (subsidies, research grants) always favor large enterprises and key sectors, such as aeronautics and computers. Fauroux, who has great confidence in industry's potential, proposes an automatic reduction of profits subject to taxes in an amount equal to half

of the growth, in constant francs, in R&D expenditures.

Is it because the Minister of the Budget finds the proposal scandalous (too complicated to put into action, he says) that Pierre Lafitte instead seems to have acted more prudently? One can assume so, unless it's that this proposal conflicts with the organization that Andre Giraud, the Minister of Industry, recently set up to help certain sectors, known as CODIS, the abbreviation for, "Ministerial Committee in Charge of Establishing the Directions for Industrial Development Actions of a Strategic Character."

CODIS is both a procedure and an organization, and is intended to mobilize all existing assistance that the government can provide for enterprises, including industrial research assistance. It's also intended to promote the development of technologies within some very well determined limits, never more than 5 at a time. The sectors chosen inevitably greatly favor larger firms: Office automatization, electronics for the general public, assembly-line robotization, underwater technology, bio-industry, and energy-conservation equipment. The program is completely contrary to that of "neutral" research assistance proposed by Fauroux.

While timid in this regard, Pierre Lafitte's report emphasizes two general courses of action: The strengthening of technical knowledge and the "mobility" of researchers.

Scientific and technical information systems are very weak in France. The VIII Plan's report proposes "opening research to youth" from the earliest grades. It says high schools will have to purchase 10,000 mini-computers, and that data banks and televised programs of scientific popularization must be strengthened.

The "mobility" of researchers, that is that movement of researchers from one lab to another, or from the public sector to the private sector, remains a real problem in France. Of 2000 researchers in the public sector, only about 50 per year go to work for private enterprises, an absurdly low amount. Up to now this has been blamed on the stay-at-home feelings of French researchers. But by now we know that industry does not invest in people.

It is a lot of money that these government advisers are asking for R&D. The still-unpublished budget for 1981 proposes "an exceptional effort within the field of scientific research and of large development programs." If this is voted by the Parliament this fall, the expected increase for R&D will amount to 18 per cent. This would be the first time since the departure of General DeGaulle that official incantations regarding the development of science will be translated into real, hard cash.—F.S.

Academy Extends Ban on Soviet Activities

The Sakharov issue continues to fester in relations between the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and its Soviet counterpart.

On August 12, the NAS Council, meeting at Woods Hole, Mass., voted for an indefinite extension of the six-month cutoff that it decreed last February for inter-academy meetings, symposia, and workshops. The break in the long-cultivated dealings between the two academies was provoked by the internal exile of Andrei D. Sakharov, in whose behalf NAS President Philip Handler had intervened, with apparent success, during earlier crackdowns on Soviet dissidents. The six-month suspension was voted in the hope that the Soviets would quietly back away from persecuting Sakharov, and the two academies could then resume their full schedule of contacts. (Individual exchanges of scientists were not affected by the six-month suspension.)

There's no evidence, however, that the Soviets are disposed to be influenced in this matter by outside scorn or ostracism; Sakharov remains in internal exile, and, according to periodic reports, is subject to continual surveillance and a good deal of harassment.

With the six-month suspension of activities soon to expire, the NAS Council noted in a resolution that Sakharov's plight remains unchanged.

The resolution is actually quite foggy in telling the Soviets what comes next. Thus, it states that the suspension originated in the NAS' concern over Sakharov, and adds, "This concern continues." After this follows: "The Council hopes that circumstances will so improve as to permit the resumption of these interacademy exchanges." Nowhere does the resolution come out directly and state that the suspension is to be continued. However, an accompanying NAS press release states that the Council voted "to extend its suspension of bilateral" activities.

The Soviets, being well versed in exegesis of official documents, will probably get the message, but they can be forgiven for feeling some confusion in this dispute with their academician colleagues in the US. The resolution notes that the present interacademy deal expires at the end of this year, and states, "We have authorized our Foreign Secretary to begin discussions directed toward a new interacademy agreement more appropriate to scientific progress and with greater emphasis on multinational arrangements."

The resolution also says that arms control and disarmament are so important that "the Council will press for meetings at which scientists of the USA and the USSR can discuss thoroughly the technical aspects of this problem."

While the Soviets try to decipher this peculiar communication, some Washington observers of Soviet-American scientific dealings are expressing doubts about the value of putting heat on the Soviet Academy. According to one official close to the White House, the word coming back from Moscow is that but for intervention by the Soviet Academy, Sakharov would be experiencing a fate worse than internal exile. It's his colleagues in the Academy, these reports insist, who are his shield against punitive hardliners.

In any case, the available evidence suggests that the Academy cutoff and various other chills in research-related dealings between the two countries are disagreeable for the Soviets but far from intolerable. One senior US science official in Washington says that the message coming out of the scientific counselor's office at the Soviet Embassy is simply this: If you intend to keep up this nonsense for any prolonged period, let us know so that we can work out substitute exchange relationships with other countries.

Science & Government Report
Northwest Station
Box 6226A
Washington, D.C. 20015

Second class postage paid
at Washington, D.C.

9999

Xerox-University Microfilms
300 N. Zeeb Rd
Ann Arbor

MI 48106

